

protected

Magazine of National Parks Association of Queensland

a focus on global national parks

UNVEILING THE IMPACT OF PARKS ON OUR LIVES

PLUS

Protected Areas in Indonesia

ALSO FEATURED

Future Land Use for Conservation

Kroombit Threatened Frogs Project

NPAQ Moments in Time

Drop Bears: a look at Koalas

Ranger Spotlight



Issue 42
Summer 2024

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The National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ) advocates for the protection, expansion, effective management and presentation of national parks and other protected areas in Queensland.

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Banner Photo (left): Stradbroke Island - Paul Donatui

Banner Photo (pages 18-19): *Laridae* (Great crested tern) - S Smith

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Editor Samantha Smith

Want to get involved with NPAQ?

NPAQ welcomes people from all walks of life and offers a variety of ways to be involved:

- | | | |
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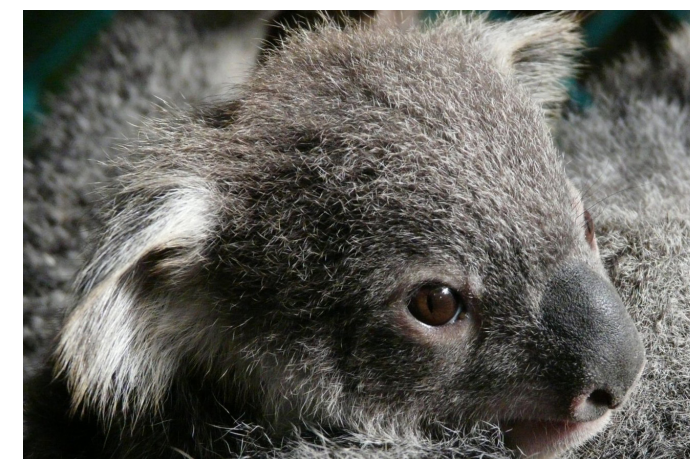
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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Susanne Cooper

Hello, everyone! It's been a very warm, wet welcome to 2024. At least, large portions of our flora and fauna are flourishing given the additional moisture and warm temperatures.

On another thread, early indications suggest that 2024 will be a year of opportunity, given the State elections later in October and the potential to gain commitments from both parties that benefit National Parks.

Are we seeing a shift in how the government is approaching Protected Areas (PAs)? Indications suggest that times are changing. It's interesting that initial feedback from both the Queensland government and opposition indicates that private protected areas (PPAs) are of increased interest in the expansion and management of the Protected Area Estate, including progressing toward the 17% by 2032 target.

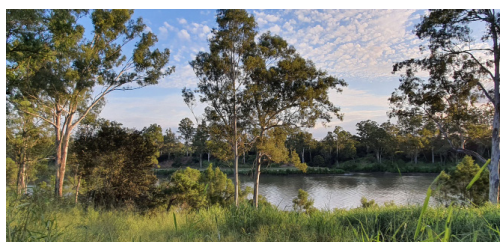
Why is this? The scale of Australia and Queensland is one factor. Just in Queensland, achieving 30% in PAs is equal to an area the size of Spain, which presents a challenge to both secure and then manage. And if Queensland were a country, it would be the 10th largest nation in the world.

Evidence over the past few years has indicated that declaring a new National Park is seen as a positive announcement that generates constructive media and support. However, the next step

of effective management is seen by the general community as a less exciting investment. Funds for park management have not kept pace with the expansion of PAs, and so, feral pests, weeds, and fires are poorly managed in many National Parks.

Private Protected Areas that are secured by NGOs offer an interesting alternative to this. Organisations including Trust for Nature, The Nature Conservancy, Australia Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia, and others are actively securing land to protect its ecological values. They became established in Australia in the 1970s and now contribute to managing over 3 million square kilometres of land and own around 50,000 square kilometres.

Queensland's first Special Wildlife Reserve (private land that has a level of protection similar to National Parks) was Pullen Pullen Reserve in the west of the State. This extensive area of 56,000 ha was purchased by Bush Heritage Australia in 2016 to protect critical habitat for the endangered Night Parrot. It is also actively managed, including substantially reducing feral animals, especially foxes and cats.



The Queensland government's goal of achieving 17% of land protected by 2032 is an ambitious target given the scale of our state. Traditionally, we have seen this as the government's role to acquire and manage such areas. This is changing as the role of NGOs becomes more active, and governments at state and federal levels lag in providing adequate funding.

NGOs are attracting substantial funding from people interested in donating to on-ground nature conservation. Australia now has the second-largest percentage of land managed privately for conservation in the world, after the USA. Many PPAs that are owned by these NGOs are open to the public, though often only at certain times of the year.

All of this indicates that the role of government and NGOs is changing. NPAQ intends to establish productive relationships with such organisations.

Times don't stand still, and NPAQ will engage constructively with this positive shift.

Susanne Cooper
President, NPAQ

Photo Banner: Cobbold Gorge - Wikimedia Commons
Photo Inline: Pullen Reach - Bushedd on Flickr

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

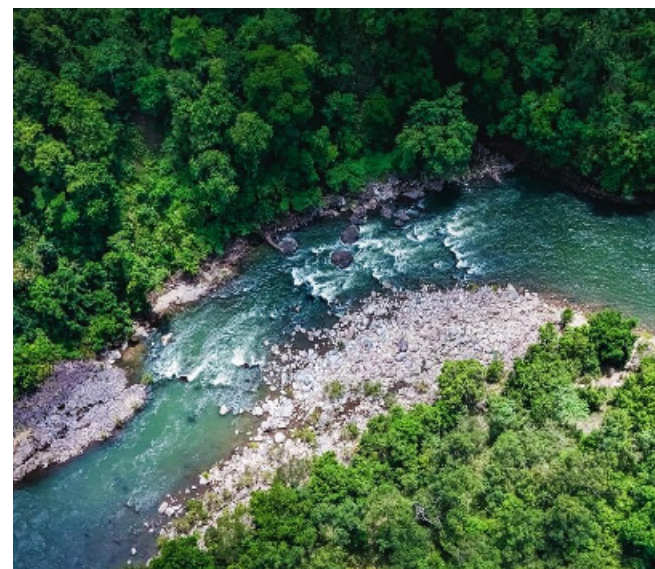
Do you have photos from a visit to a national park or protected area? Send them to admin@npaql.org.au or connect with us on Instagram [@nationalparksassocqld](https://www.instagram.com/nationalparksassocqld) for your chance to feature in the next edition of NPAQ's PROTECTED Magazine! The best photos will also be featured on NPAQ social media channels and go in the draw to win some awesome NPAQ prizes*.



Burleigh Heads National Park
(@BigVolcano - Instagram)



White-bellied Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)
(@mozziephotography - Instagram)



Tully Gorge National Park
(@trendy.neo - Instagram)



D'Aguilar National Park
(@msmoodley - Instagram)

UNVEILING THE IMPACT OF PARKS ON OUR LIVES

- The Editor

The following was summarised from a paper by the University of Adelaide published in 2023: <https://media.adelaide.edu.au/economics/papers/doc/wp2023-02.pdf>

Imagine stepping into a world where nature's embrace boosts not just your mood but also the economy and community health.

This isn't a fantasy – it's the reality of our parks and reserves.

From local picnics to international tourism, these green havens are more than scenic spots; they're economic powerhouses and health sanctuaries.

Why do we flock to these natural oases?

It's not just about the fresh air or the scenic beauty.

It's a quest for well-being, a break from the digital grind, a chance to rejuvenate.

Yes, time outdoors means time away from other tasks, but the rewards – a healthier, happier you – are priceless.



Regardless of background or income, they offer everyone a slice of tranquillity and adventure.

Regular visits translate to improved health, potentially cutting down on medical bills and enhancing life satisfaction.

But how do we measure the true value of these natural treasures?

It's not just about the tranquil moments or the laughter shared on a family hike.



There's a tangible impact, a monetary value tied to their existence.

This isn't just academic speculation; it's backed by research, like the insights gleaned from the referenced paper, which highlights the stark difference in health between park-goers and others.

In South Australia, a staggering 75% of residents have wandered through state parks, with most visiting multiple times a year.

These visits aren't just casual strolls; they represent a commitment to personal health and a love for nature.

In 2019, the allure of nature drew people to parks an average of four times a year.

Most ventured into these green spaces 1-3 times, a mere 1% overlooked their importance.

A significant 53% cherished parks for their role in safeguarding nature, and 46% appreciated the health benefits they offer.

In the metropolitan areas of South Australia, those who visited parks in 2018-19 experienced a noticeable 2-5% boost in health compared to those who didn't visit.

This improvement in well-being was observed across various socioeconomic groups, with all park-goers reporting enhanced health.

While a 2-5% increase in health may appear slight, it significantly impacts public healthcare costs, equating to a \$140 million reduction.

This figure represents almost 4% of South Australia's budget for chronic diseases in 2018. Ongoing research could provide deeper insights into these positive health

Snapshot: Recreation and wellbeing benefits for SA's metropolitan national parks:



outcomes associated with park visits.

Parks are more than just patches of green; they are vital to our collective well-being.

A slight increase in park visits can lead to massive healthcare savings.

And in a world where health and happiness are priceless, these nature nooks offer an abundance of both.

So, what's the takeaway?

These studies aren't just numbers on a page; they're a call to action.

By increasing accessibility to parks, particularly for those in less affluent areas, we're not just enhancing landscapes; we're boosting public health, fostering community bonds, and nurturing a healthier, more vibrant society.

In a nutshell, parks are not mere luxuries; they are necessities.

They represent the heartbeat of our communities, offering a sanctuary for our bodies and souls. So next time you're in a park, remember, you're not just on a walk; you're part of a bigger, beautiful picture.



Photo Banner: Epiphyte- Karen Langton
Photo Inline (left bottom): Boolumba creek - NPAQ archives
Photo Inline (left center): Family hiking in QLD National Park - NPAQ archives
Photo Inline (above): Sierra with butterfly - NPAQ Archives

PROTECTED AREAS IN INDONESIA

- Steve Noakes

About the author.
NPAQ member and former Councillor and Vice President, Steve Noakes, has a long association with protected areas and wildlife tourism in Indonesia. He is Chair of the Advisory Board of the Ecolodges Indonesia Group of Companies which owns and operates lodges adjacent to Way Kambas National Park (Sumatra), Rimba Orangutan Ecolodge (Tanjung Putting National Park, Kalimantan), Kelimutu Crater Lakes Ecolodge (Kelimutu National Park, Flores) and Mbeliling Mountain Ecolodge (Mbeliling Forest Reserve, Flores). Steve is also Chair of the Board at Binna Burra Lodge inside the Lamington National Park, Queensland.

An archipelago of national parks and ecolodges.



Managing over 50 national parks across the largest archipelago in the world to form a single state is a challenging task. The challenge is compounded when we look at the total picture of well over 500 protected areas throughout Indonesia!

Indonesia has 566 protected areas covering 36,069,368.04 ha.¹ Most (490) are terrestrial protected areas (22,540,170.38 ha) with the remaining 76 marine protected areas (13,529,197.66 ha).

The terrestrial protected areas include 43 National Parks, 239 Nature Reserves, 70 Game Reserves, 13 Hunting Parks, 22 Grand Forest Parks,

and 103 Nature Tourism Parks.

Marine National Parks comprise 4,589,006.10 ha. Managed with the leadership of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the 'magnificent seven'² marine national parks are Kepulauan Seribu National Park, Karimunjawa National Park, Wakatobi National Park, Bunaken National Park, Kepulauan Togean National Park, Taka Bonerate National Park, and Teluk Cenderawasih National Park.

Stretching between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans and bridging two continents, Indonesia includes the fascinating biogeographic division of the Wallace Line,³ which delineates the faunas of Australia and southeast Asia. Comprising upland, lowland, coastal, mangroves, swamp, savanna, evergreen forest, mountain range, and aquatic ecosystems, Indonesia's national parks are increasingly becoming attractive to domestic and international tourists seeking an experience outside the ever-popular Bali and major cultural attractions such as the Borobudur and Prambanan temple complex near Yogyakarta.

Providing access to some of these unique ecosystems and supporting biodiversity conservation efforts and local communities was the original vision almost three decades ago by the founder of Ecolodges Indonesia, veterinarian Dr. Alan Wilson, and his wife, Meryl.

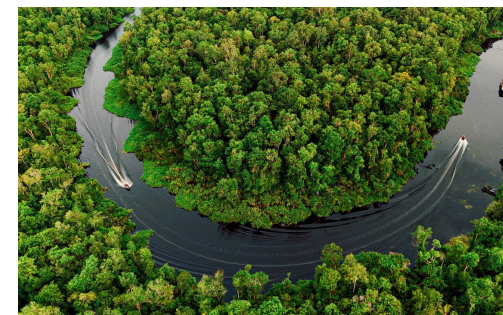
In 1996, a small group of Indonesians and Australians collaborated to build an ecolodge at Udayana University, aimed as a teaching facility to assist

the Conservation Department of the oldest and largest University in Bali. The second lodge was built in Labuan Bajo (Flores/Komodo National Park) in 1998 to support the potential of the Komodo National Park.⁴

Both ecolodges only employed local people based on the Masai conservation model in the Masai Mara in East Africa where Alan and Meryl were raised.⁵ The success of the second lodge led to the concept of Ecolodges Indonesia. Subsequently, the company built or redesigned four other lodges in Indonesia, including Rimba Orangutan Ecolodge (Tanjung Putting National Park), Satwa Sumatra Ecolodge (Way Kambas National Park), Kelimutu Crater Lakes Ecolodge (Kelimutu National Park), and Mbeliling Mountain Ecolodge (Mbeliling Forest Reserve, Flores).

A brief introduction to each of the Ecolodge locations:

Tanjung Putting National Park in Central Kalimantan (Borneo) covers 3,040 sq km. The 'iconic mega-fauna' is the orangutans, creating international awareness through the extensive efforts of the Orangutan Foundation International⁶ based at the Camp Leakey research station inside the park. The proboscis monkey with its "Jimmy Durante" nose as well as seven other primate species are found in the park, which includes clouded leopards, civets, Malaysian sun bears, mouse deer, barking deer, sambar deer, and the wild cattle known as banteng. Tanjung Putting hosts over 230 species of birds, including hornbills, deep forest birds, and many wetland species.



Way Kambas National Park in southern Sumatra has high genetic biodiversity. It is particularly known as the home of the endangered five big mammals - Sumatran Elephant, Sumatran Rhino, Sumatran Tiger, Honey Bear, and Tapir. The park has 406 bird species and 50 different species of mammals. It covers 125,621.30 ha of riverways, swamp and lowland rainforest. Way Kambas National Park is part of the network of ASEAN Heritage Parks.

Kelimutu National Park is best known for its three-coloured lakes. The highest point is at Mt Kelibara (1,731 metres), and 1,690 metres at Mt Kelimutu. The park protects 19 endemic and endangered animals including the Floresian punai (Treron floris), Wallacea owl (Otus silvicola), Floresian kancilan (Pachycephala nudigula), Floresian eagle (Spizeatus floris), and Timorese tesia (Tesia everetti). It includes some 140 species of woody plants (trees and shrubs), 57 species of birds, 13 species of mammals, and four species of reptile.

Mbeliling Forest Reserve is located less than one hour's drive up the mountains to the west of the gateway port of Labuan Bajo near Komodo National Park, Flores. At 1,239 m, Mount Mbeliling is the highest point in

west Flores. The Forest Reserve spans over an area of 15,000 hectares. It is the habitat of numerous endemic plant species and birds. The Jakarta Post reports that several Komodo dragons have been found near Golo Mori and Tanjung Kerita Mese villages in the Mbeliling Forest area.⁷

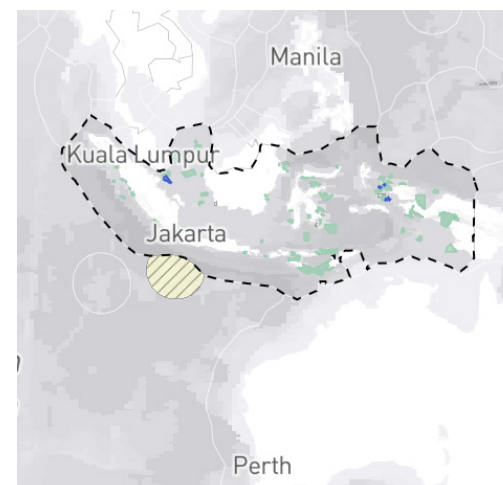
Concluding comments.

A global biodiversity hotspot, there will be increased pressure to conserve Indonesia's sensitive natural areas over the next few decades as the local population and tourism grow. Currently, with some 270 million people, Indonesia ranks number four in terms of country populations, and within a few years, that will grow to 300 million across more than 300 ethnic groups. The largest economy in Southeast Asia, it is currently the world's 10th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity⁸ and is expected to be the world's 4th largest economy within 20 years.

Climate change is already having an impact, including water availability, health and nutrition, disaster risk management, and urban development. These issues are especially relevant in the numerous coastal zones and in the protected natural areas, with additional implications for poverty and inequality. Indonesia's protected natural areas, including tropical rainforests, peatlands, and mangrove forests, can store significant amounts of carbon that can mitigate global climate change impacts.

The world needs successful outcomes in Indonesia for biodiversity conservation and well-managed national parks. They are all part of

the "natural solutions" in helping communities cope with the climate change problem (IUCN 2016).



References:

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- ² Ecolodges Indonesia www.ecolodgesindonesia.com
- ³ Magnificent Seven Indonesia Marine National Parks www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/id/The-Magnificent-Seven-Indonesias-Marine-National-Parks.pdf
- ⁴ The Alfred Russel Wallace Website <https://wallacefund.myspecies.info/>
- ⁵ Komodo National Park was founded in 1980 to protect the Komodo dragon, the world's largest lizard. Later it was dedicated to protecting other species, including marine species. In 1991 the national park was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- ⁶ Now living in the Eco Village in Currumbin, Alan and Meryl Wilson have donated land for protected habitat for native wildlife in Queensland. www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-10/protected-land/100283642
- ⁷ OFI <https://orangutan.org/rainforest/tanjung-puting-national-park/>
- ⁸ www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/12/11/komodos-found-mbeliling-forest.html
- ⁸ World Bank: Indonesia. www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/overview

Photo Banner: Rimba Orangutan Ecolodge - Provided

Photo Inline (left): Satwa Elephant Ecolodge - Provided

Photo Inline (right top): Sekonyer River, Tanjung Putting National Park Kalimantan

Photo Inline (above): Indonesia boundary and marine area - Provided

NPAQ CEO REFLECTIONS

- Chris Thomas

It's been just over a year since I joined NPAQ, so I thought I'd share a few of my early reflections.

I moved to Brisbane from Adelaide in October 2022, having spent 30 years working in government. I'd never contemplated working outside of government until COVID hit. Overnight, my full-time office job turned into a full-time working-from-home job, which got me thinking about other opportunities.

What attracted me to the NPAQ CEO role was threefold: being involved with the expansion of protected areas in Queensland, working outside of government, and moving to Brisbane where my daughter lived. It just seemed like the perfect job at the perfect time, and it was! 15 months on, I can honestly say I have no regrets.



My first impression of NPAQ was of a highly regarded and long-established environmental non-government organisation, with a lot of history and achievements. The bookcase in my office held a treasure trove of memorabilia and reference material, and I felt in awe of the legacy I was now a part of. I was particularly surprised to discover just how many national parks in existence today, which are enjoyed by Queenslanders and visitors to the state, resulted from the persistence and tenacity of NPAQ and its dedicated members.

Still to date, NPAQ has members with

over 60 years of association, which is nothing short of astonishing!



My next thought was of the plethora of environmental non-government organisations in Queensland and how NPAQ was going to stand out and survive. It occurred to me that NPAQ would need to find a point of difference and evolve quickly if it wanted to remain relevant in the long term. That point of difference for me is synonymous with NPAQ's motto, "Connect and Protect". From the formative days of Romeo Lahey and establishing Binna Burra as the gateway to Lamington National Park in the 1930s, NPAQ has been an advocate for creating national parks for both conservation and public appreciation. As a passionate outdoor enthusiast and regular national park hiker, that is a purpose that certainly resonates with me.

During my first three months as NPAQ CEO, as well as doing a lot of reading and listening, I focused on assisting the Council to develop a new, three-year strategic plan to chart a clear and purposeful way forward in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympics/Paralympics. That process was a lot easier than I had anticipated, with less bureaucracy and a simple approvals process.

That is probably my third reflection, that working outside of government is more straightforward, so you can get more done in a short space of time. That leads me to my fourth reflection,

which relates to the wisdom of taking managed risks. When I joined NPAQ, there were two part-time staff and a reasonable reliance on volunteers. This kept annual expenses low but also limited NPAQ's capacity and productivity. NPAQ's decision to bring on a CEO effectively doubled its capacity as well as its annual expenses, without any certainty of increased revenue. NPAQ's financial reserves were healthy at the time, due to some significant bequests over the years, which has given us time to develop a revenue strategy aimed at achieving financial sustainability by end 2024. This will put NPAQ in a much stronger position into the future.

My final reflection is about how we conduct business. While most environmental NGOs take on an adversarial role, with a focus on lobbying and campaigning, NPAQ pursues its mission via advocacy and diplomacy. Having spent 30 years working for Environment Ministers and Environment Departments, I can attest to the merits of that approach, which we have been refining over the past year. NPAQ now meets with the QPWS Executive every six weeks to discuss the implementation of the Protected Area Strategy and other matters of mutual interest. As part of those discussions, NPAQ has been negotiating a significant grant agreement to establish a Parks Connect Program in Southeast Queensland, similar to a program I used to run in South Australia. I'm confident this program will strengthen NPAQ's point of difference and greatly assist our evolution.

Photo Banner: Chris Thomas at Great Barrier Reef Marine Park - Provided

Photo Inline (left): Chris Thomas at Kondalilla National Park - Provided

Photo Inline (center): Chris Thomas in the Whitsundays - Provided

KROOMBIT THREATENED FROGS

- Queensland Frog Society

Summary of Queensland Frog Society's Kroombit Threatened Frogs Community Sustainability Action Grant Project

Situated 70 km southwest of Gladstone, Kroombit Tops National Park is home to the critically endangered Kroombit tinkerfrog and Kroombit treefrog, both of which are known only from areas of wet forest habitat at Kroombit Tops.



Over the past four years - with support from the Queensland Government's Community Sustainability Action (CSA) Grant Program - Queensland Frog Society (QFS) volunteers have been actively involved in efforts to recover these critically endangered species.

Activities funded by the CSA Grant Program, undertaken by QFS in collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) during this time, included:

- Eight week-long surveys targeting threatened frog species (once in spring/summer and once in summer/autumn during the 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23 wet seasons).
- Annual collation and analysis of data from acoustic recorders deployed between spring and summer surveys for each year of

surveys.

- Construction of 0.2 km of pig exclusion fencing around a key Kroombit tinkerfrog breeding site.

The results of surveys and monitoring over the past four wet seasons (and previous surveys/monitoring undertaken by QPWS) show a significant and continuing decline in the abundance and distribution of the Kroombit tinkerfrog since the early 2000s, with the species now likely confined to two rainforest patches with a total area of about 70 ha. Survey and acoustic monitoring data from QFS monitoring/surveys show numbers of this species remain critically low, with the total number of adult animals remaining in the wild likely less than 250 individuals.



Observations of pig damage (diggings, rooting, and wallows) made during surveys show that pigs remain a significant threat to the Kroombit tinkerfrog, and ongoing control/management is important for securing the survival of the species.

Data from surveys and monitoring undertaken by QFS demonstrated the persistence of the Kroombit treefrog at historical presence sites on plateau streams in the east of Kroombit Tops. Numbers of this species, however, appear lower

overall compared with the late 1990s and 2000s.

Data collected by QFS volunteers for this project have helped to clarify the current status of the critically endangered Kroombit tinkerfrog and Kroombit treefrog and also provided information on weed spread and habitat disturbance/destruction by feral pigs being used to guide management of these threats at Kroombit Tops NP.

Information from surveys and monitoring conducted by QFS volunteers has also helped inform the translocation of captive-bred Kroombit tinkerfrogs to the wild (part of ongoing efforts to recover the species by QPWS and Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary). Acoustic monitoring data collected as part of this project will serve as a baseline for assessing the effectiveness or otherwise of these translocations.

While CSA Grant funding of QFS surveys and monitoring of the Kroombit tinkerfrog and Kroombit treefrog has come to an end, QFS will continue to support efforts to recover the Kroombit tinkerfrog by providing acoustic recorders (purchased using CSA grant funds) to monitor changes in tinker frog numbers at release sites.

Photo Banner: Kroombit treefrog (*Litoria kroombitensis*) - Ed Meyer
Photo Inline (left): Kroombit tinkerfrog (*Taudactylus pleione*) - Ed Meyer
Photo Inline (center): QFS volunteer deploying acoustic recorder - Harry Hines

FUTURE LAND USE FOR CONSERVATION

- The Editor

In the heart of our planet's green treasures lies a complex challenge: how to balance the preservation of biodiversity with the needs of local communities.

This intricate dance defines the struggle faced by protected areas (PAs) worldwide.

However, a beacon of hope emerges from Satchari National Park (SNP) in Bangladesh, where a ground-breaking study explores the transformative power of integrating ecosystem services (ES) into land-use planning, potentially reshaping the landscape of PA



The insights from this study, available on Science Direct <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212041617302383?via%3Dihub>, offer a compelling narrative of

hope and innovation.

The Global Challenge: A Call to Safeguard Nature's Precious Sanctuaries

Protected areas are the lifelines of our planet, safeguarding dwindling forests and diverse biodiversity.

Yet, managing these sanctuaries, especially in developing nations, is fraught with challenges.

Limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and the perpetual clash between conservation goals and human necessities hinder efforts.

It's not just a desire to manage these areas effectively; it's an urgent necessity for the numerous species reliant on them.

A New Dawn: Ecosystem Services Riding to the Rescue

Enter the concept of ecosystem services—a vast array of benefits nature bestows upon us, from the air we breathe to the water we drink.

This framework, gaining momentum in environmental policy, accentuates the intricate connection between human

well-being and ecological health. Aligning conservation goals with the provision of these services charts a sustainable course that respects both nature and human needs.



Satchari National Park: A Microcosm of Global Challenges

Nestled in the northeast of Bangladesh, SNP encapsulates the complex challenges faced by protected areas globally.

Rich in biodiversity, the park coexists with dense human settlements, presenting a management challenge.

Researchers embarked on a ground-breaking study, mapping and assessing the capacity of different land-use/land cover (LULC) types within and around the park to provide diverse ES.

Unveiling the Results: A Victory for All

The study's findings were nothing short of illuminating.

LULC within SNP exhibited a remarkable ability to offer higher supporting and regulating ecosystem services compared to the surrounding areas.

This revealed a crucial truth: preserving these habitats wasn't just about conserving biodiversity but also about sustaining the natural services crucial for the well-being of surrounding communities.

Participatory Approach: Weaving in Community Voices

At the heart of the study was its participatory approach.

Involving local stakeholders in shaping future land-use scenarios ensured that the voices of those most impacted by conservation policies were not merely heard but actively considered.

This inclusive method proved pivotal in addressing the unique challenges of land management in PAs.

Looking Ahead: Ramifications for PA Management

The implications of the study are profound.

It emphasises the imperative for PA managers to integrate ecosystem services into their strategies.

This approach could foster a delicate equilibrium between conservation goals and the livelihood needs of local communities, ensuring harmonious coexistence and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Overcoming Challenges: Paving the Road Ahead

Despite promising findings, integrating ES into land-use planning poses challenges.

Quantifying these services demands time, resources, and expertise.

The study advocates for innovative, user-friendly methods to seamlessly and effectively integrate this paradigm shift.

Final Thoughts: A Blueprint for Tomorrow

The SNP study transcends being a local solution; it emerges as a blueprint for PA management globally.

Prioritising ecosystem services has the potential to revolutionise how we perceive and manage these vital areas.

It signifies a journey towards a future where conservation and community needs aren't adversaries but integral components of a harmonious whole.



Photo Banner: Satchari National Park - M Rahman Tarek
Photo Inline (left): Satchari National Park Gate - Nahal Ahmed
Photo Inline (center left): Capped Langur (*Trachypitecus pileatus*) - Md Shahanshah
Photo Inline (above): Indian White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) - Md Shahanshah

PARK IN FOCUS

Bladensburg National Park

** Always check the park alerts on the QPWS website for the latest information on access, closures and conditions*

Nestled in the heart of Central West Queensland, Bladensburg National Park stands as a testament to the region's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage. Celebrating its 40th birthday after being declared in 1984 and stretching across 84,900 hectares of Mitchell Grass Downs and Channel Country, this vast expanse of natural beauty is a haven for unique birdlife, diverse plant species, and a variety of animals that call it home.



The park is a living canvas, adorned with flat-topped plateaus, residual sandstone ranges, and the sweeping plains of grassland that create a picturesque backdrop. River red gums line the river flats, while rocky scarps add character to the landscape, forming a harmonious blend of terrain that captivates the senses.

Beyond its natural wonders, Bladensburg National Park is steeped in cultural significance. It is the ancestral land of the Koa people, and the Maiawali and Karuwali people share a strong connection to this captivating landscape. The echoes of their traditions and stories reverberate through the park, creating a tapestry where nature and culture intertwine.

At the heart of Bladensburg lies a piece of history—the remnants of a large pastoral station established by early pastoralists. The homestead, meticulously restored, now serves as an information center and ranger office, offering visitors a glimpse into the park's pastoral roots. Scattered throughout the park, other historical sites provide poignant reminders of Bladensburg's early pastoral history, inviting exploration and reflection.

Caring for this pristine environment is a shared responsibility, and visitors are encouraged to play their part in preserving the park's natural and cultural treasures. A set of guidelines emphasizes the importance of leaving everything as it is found—whether living or dead, all components of this ecosystem are protected. Feeding wildlife is discouraged to maintain the delicate balance of nature, and waste management practices ensure that the park remains unspoiled by human activities.

Visitors are urged to use designated toilets, and where such facilities are not available, to bury toilet waste appropriately. The spread of weeds and pathogens is also a concern, with guidelines advising thorough cleaning of camping gear and vehicles to prevent the introduction of foreign species.

Bladensburg National Park is a haven where domestic animals are not permitted, ensuring the undisturbed harmony of the natural environment. The commitment to conservation is evident in the meticulous management efforts led

by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Their role is to safeguard the park's unique attributes, balancing the preservation of its natural and cultural values.

As each park in the Longreach area boasts distinctive features, Bladensburg National Park stands out for its diverse tapestry of landscapes and cultural heritage. It is a sanctuary where the past, present, and future converge, inviting all who enter to appreciate, respect, and help care for this extraordinary piece of Central West Queensland's natural and cultural legacy.

In an exciting update, Bladensburg National Park will soon almost double in size to 150,721 hectares, following the Queensland Government's acquisition of Melrose Station (around 65,000 hectare). Full details at: <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/99564>

**At the time of publishing, Bladensburg National Park and other parks and forests in the Longreach and Winton area are temporarily closed due to high rainfall associated with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Kirrily*



Photo Banner: Bough Shed Hole at Bladensburg National Park - Ben Cordia

Photo Inline (left): Spinifex pigeon (Geophaps plumifera) - Nmulconray

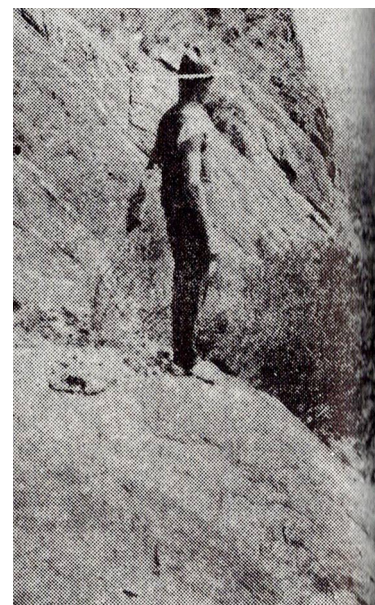
Photo Inline (above): Porcupine grass - John Tann

NPAQ MOMENTS IN TIME

- NPAQ Archives



On the summit is a cairn of stones



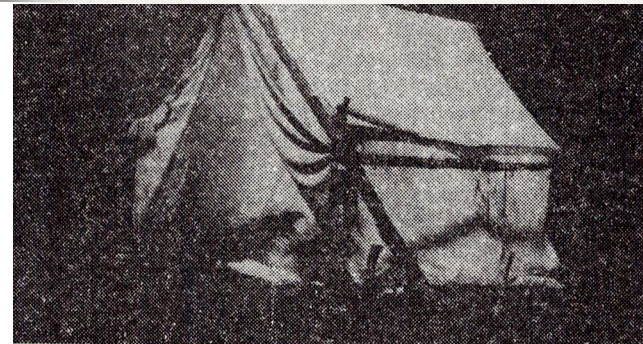
Norman Webster on Beerwah

Glasshouse Mountains NPs

Four o'clock came, and the right place had not been struck. We were just about to give up for the day when we came across a likely-looking place, which was further round than we anticipated. Investigation proved that we had found the right track, so we climbed 400 feet, sometimes through stunted trees and sometimes over steep, bare rock. At all times it was necessary to hold on by hands and feet. A more level place being found, we stopped climbing, as the sun was getting low, and a walk over exceedingly rough country back to our camp was ahead of us. With the knowledge that we had found the right track, we made our way to the bottom, arriving just as the sun had crossed the horizon. Before much of the intervening walk had been covered darkness set in, and though full moon was due that night little use could be made of its light on account of the high trees obscuring its rays. We bore too much to the right, and in the semi-darkness could not find the camp. Ridges and gullies were followed up and down alternately and we were just going to give up for the night when the camp hove in sight.

On the morning of the third day, we were up early prepared to make a second attempt at Beerwah. This was more successful and two hours after leaving the bottom we were holding on to the summit. The first eight or nine hundred feet is straight going, though it is alternately through brush and over bare rock. This track leads up to the base of the cliff. Parts of the rock here are squared, and as the pillars stand perpendicularly the formation resembles a gigantic pipe organ. The base is composed of white sandstone, but the action of the weather is wearing it away consequently the ground is inches deep in dust of the likeness of cement. Comic writings are scratched in the stone, such as "Look out for the comet", "Take the lift" &c. This cliff is followed round until the end is reached, when another climb of several hundred feet brings one to the top. This part of the climb is different to the first, as for the most part it consists of large steps, each five or six feet high.

On the summit is a cairn of stones in the centre of which stands a white-painted square pole. This pole is surmounted by four semi-circles of galvanised iron painted black. The semi-circles are nailed to the four faces of the post, so that from which ever point one looks a complete circle is always seen. Our names were written on paper and left in a bottle with a screw cap. A westerly wind was blowing strong and at no time was it safe to walk about freely.



Easter camp 1924
A moonlight exposure

Photo Banner: Glass House Mountains Mt Tunbubudla - Unknown

Photo Inline (left): Glasshouse Mountains NPAQ Trip - NPAQ 1924 Archives

WILDLIFE FEATURE

Drop Bears - a Look at Koalas

- The Editor

RANGER SPOTLIGHT

Yarning with Senior Ranger Boyd on the wonders of K'gari

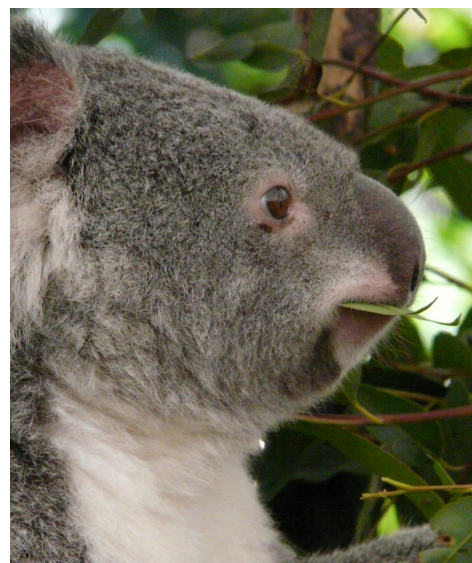
Senior Ranger Boyd
Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS)



In the eucalypt forests of Queensland, Australia, a quintessential symbol of the country's unique wildlife clings to life – the koala. These charismatic marsupials, with their fuzzy ears and spoon-shaped noses, have long captured hearts worldwide. However, Queensland's koala populations are facing an uphill battle for survival, making their conservation a matter of urgent concern.

A Peek into the Koala's World

Koalas are not just adorable; they are remarkable creatures adapted to a highly specialised diet and lifestyle. Found predominantly along the eastern coast of Australia, Queensland koalas inhabit a range of habitats, from coastal islands and lowland eucalypt forests to the inland woodlands. These habitats provide the koalas with their exclusive diet – eucalyptus leaves. These leaves, toxic to most animals, are the cornerstone of the koala's diet, providing them with all the moisture and nutrients they need.



The Eucalyptus Diet: A Double-Edged Sword

Koalas are fussy eaters, feeding on the leaves of only a few eucalypt species. This diet is low in calories, which is why koalas are often seen sleeping for up to 18-20 hours a day to conserve energy. However, this strict diet makes them highly vulnerable to habitat loss. Without their specific eucalypt trees, koalas cannot survive.

Habitat: Home Among the Gum Trees

Koala habitats are as unique as their diet. In Queensland, they prefer open eucalypt woodlands where trees are widely spaced, allowing for easy movement and visibility. These habitats are not just feeding grounds but also serve as breeding and social interaction sites. Eucalypt forests along the coastal areas of Queensland, particularly in the southeast, are prime koala habitats.

Threats: The Battle for Survival

Despite their iconic status, Queensland's koalas face a myriad of threats. Habitat destruction, due to urbanisation and land clearing for agriculture, poses the most significant risk. As their habitats shrink, koalas are forced into smaller areas, leading to overcrowding, increased competition for food, and higher susceptibility to diseases like chlamydia.

Climate change exacerbates these threats, altering their habitats and affecting eucalyptus growth. Extreme weather events, such as droughts and heatwaves, not only reduce their food availability but also cause heat stress, a growing

concern for koala populations. Additionally, koalas face dangers from vehicle strikes and dog attacks, especially in urban-fringe areas.

The Road Ahead: Conservation Efforts

Efforts are underway to protect these beloved marsupials. Conservation strategies focus on habitat preservation and restoration, creating wildlife corridors to connect fragmented habitats, and implementing stringent land-clearing regulations. Research is also being conducted to understand koala behaviour and health better, crucial for effective conservation planning.

Conclusion: A Beacon of Hope

The plight of Queensland's koalas is a stark reminder of the impact of human activity on wildlife. As conservationists and communities rally to protect these icons, there is hope. By preserving koala habitats and mitigating threats, we can ensure that these endearing creatures continue to thrive in Queensland's eucalypt forests, a symbol of Australia's rich natural heritage.



Photo Banner: Juvenile Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) - Unknown

Photo Inline (left): Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) - Unknown

Photo Inline (above): Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) - Karen Langton

For Butchulla man and Senior Ranger Boyd, K'gari is much more than a beautiful holiday destination and World Heritage Area he manages as part of his day job.

'In the creation story of my people, K'gari is our mother and we are her children. The lakes are the twinkle of her eyes, and the sand is her skin.'

Boyd said, 'K'gari is a natural wonder that deserves great respect and protection. It is a part of Australia that is thousands of years old and entirely unique.'

'The ocean, beaches, forests, freshwater lakes, sand dunes and creeks, and wildlife like the wongari (dingo) and whales—there is an incredible diversity of nature here for you to witness,' he says.

'The wongari are part of our creation and companions to the Butchulla people. It's important that they are respected, and people remain cautious around them.'

'We all need to respect them as the wild creatures that they are. If you were in Africa, you wouldn't feed a lion. Wongari are protected as a native species and they play a key role in the island's ecosystem.'

'The island is their home, and you can help them when visiting K'gari by respecting them and giving them space. Always Be Dingo-Safe! on K'gari.' Ranger Boyd says his favourite biome on the island is the rainforest, though the island's diversity overall is what truly inspires him.

'The sight of the rainforest cutting into the sand dunes is incredible. You could not copy and paste that. Then you have the pristine waters and aquifer system that feeds Eli Creek, and the marshlands. The whole of K'gari is remarkable! 'We have guests that return every year to go camping and four-wheel driving.'

Boyd's top tip for visitors is to 'plan your trips and where you want to be.'

Understand the tides and distances to travel between the north and south. If in doubt, speak to the Butchulla people or ask a Ranger, we're always happy to help make your K'gari experience safe and enjoyable.'

When it comes to keeping K'gari beautiful, Boyd said he always encourages visitors to 'take memories, leave only footprints and of course, take time and connect to the Country!'

'When visiting, it's best we all look after the environment. People need to remember K'gari's island ecosystem has evolved over thousands of years and is vulnerable to human impacts. Visitors need to clean their vehicles and tents before they visit so they don't inadvertently bring unwanted guests like fire ants or other pest species ashore.'

'Any introduced species has the potential to survive and grow here, and severely impact the rare and endangered species living on this beautiful island.'

When asked by tourists why the island is now known as K'gari, not Fraser Island, he says the Traditional Owners never changed the name. It is and has always been K'gari.

'Since the island formally reverted to its traditional name, visitors are asking questions about our culture and are interested in enhancing their cultural understanding of the area. It's good to hear people saying 'K'gari' again.'

Boyd said he has learned a lot from engaging with visitors from different backgrounds he has met at K'gari over the years and is grateful for the opportunities he has had through his work to share the culture of his people and their love for Country with others.

'One of my best memories on K'gari is meeting Prince Harry and Meghan (then Duke and Duchess of Sussex) on their royal tour of Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga in 2018.'

'I'm not a royalist and have to live with

the injustices of colonialism, but Prince Harry is from a different generation. He acknowledged who we are, and I was glad I had the opportunity to thank him for the contribution his mother Lady Di made to the world and to mob.'

Boyd said speaking to people from around the world who recognise the Butchulla people as the Traditional Owners of K'gari has been healing to him over the years.

'Growing up my mother always said to me 'Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me.' And that's something I've always taken to heart.'

'In the end, race doesn't matter. Recognising that we're all human, getting along together peacefully and respectfully in this world, that's what's truly important.'

Boyd's aim is to bring cultural awareness and understanding into Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and to look after our natural landscapes and sea Country in his dual role of QPWS Ranger and Traditional Custodian. Boyd strongly believes that 'what is good for the land must come first'.

'We are stronger together and are all responsible for the protection of K'gari—Traditional Owners, QPWS, visitors—all of us' says Boyd.

Boyd's advice to any visitor to K'gari (and any of our amazing national parks)—'your backyard does not end at your mailbox. All of Australia, including our national parks, is our backyard and it's up to all of us to look after our Country'.

Visit K'gari, Great Sandy National Park on our website to learn more about visiting K'gari and how to best respect this natural wonder so it remains for all of our futures.

Photo Banner: Wangoolba Creek boardwalk Wangoolba Creek - Adam Creed©Qld Govt

Photo Banner (corner): Ranger Boyd - Provided



<http://parks.des.qld.gov.au/>



<http://parks.des.qld.gov.au/camping>



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WHAT'S IN

NPAQ Activities

Cycle -Caboolture to Wamuran Rail Trail and Return
Date: 7th February 2024
Meet: 9am at Beerburum Road , Caboolture , Queensland , 4510
Cost: \$5
Leader: Frank Freeman (0427 655 514)

Birdwatching - Banks Street Reserve, Ashgrove
Date: 25th February 2024
Meet: 7:30am at 44 Quandong St , Ashgrove , Queensland , 4060
Cost: \$5
Leader: Geraldine Buchanan (3349 1109)

Vegetation Management Group 2024
Date: 24th February, 23rd March, 20th April
Meet: 9am at Jolly's Lookout Lower Carpark, Mt Nebo Rd, D'Aguilar National Park
Cost: Free
Leader: Angus McElnea (0429 854 446)

Daves Creek Circuit
Date: 3rd March 2024
Meet: 8am at 1069 Binna Burra Road , Beechmont , Queensland , 4211
Cost: \$5
Leader: Frank Freeman (0427 655 514)

Upcoming NPAQ Major Events

NPAQ Seminar
Date: March 2024 TBD
Time: TBD
Venue: TBD
Cost: TBD
Organiser: Samantha Smith

Kids in National Parks - Easter school holidays
Date: April 2024 TBD
Time: Various TBD
Venue: Various TBD
Cost: Free for members
Organiser: Samantha Smith

NPAQ 2024 Post Easter Camp
Date: April 14th - 19th 2024
Time: 4pm
Venue: Sunshine Coast Hinterland
Cost: TBD
Organiser: Ian Peacock (0416 943 280)

NPAQ Romeo Lahey Lecture
Date: April 2024 TBD
Time: TBD
Venue: Brisbane City Hall
Cost: TBD
Organiser: Samantha Smith

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